

Cheerful Clapton Put Up A Fight

By ARGUS

Clapton 1;

Wycombe Wanderers 2

THE sweet smell of success has deserted the old "Spotted Dog" ground for some seasons now, but the Cockney inhabitants of Forest Gate, E.7, have certainly kept their cheerfulness and relish for soccer.

Bottom - of - the - Isthmian League Clapton gave Wycombe Wanderers their biggest shock of the season by a tear-away Terry Downes type start which had the ball nestling in the Wycombe net within the first five minutes.

Clapton's essentially young side — skippered by veteran Lawrie Wilkinson—showed more pace and enthusiasm than many of the more successful Isthmians and the Wanderers were happy to be level at half-time before assuming command in the second half.

In the final analysis a team of eleven triers was beaten by a much more mature combination. Wycombe looked cool and composed against an excitable but strong Clapton defence, but it was not until the 78th minute that Ivor Ashby lobbed Wanderers into the lead.

The strength and persistence of Ashby has given the Wycombe attack a snarl it lacked in the early stages of the season. Since he made his inside-right senior debut six first team games ago, after being switched from wing half, Ivor has collected eight goals.

Recent rains had given the ground plenty of yield and one player who seemed to appreciate the softer going was Wycombe captain Paul Bates.

DOGFIGHT

The first half was a real dog-fight, with the Wycombe defence looking suspiciously wild at times against strong Clapton attacks before the Wanderers' forwards began to exploit the rawness of the home defence.

Clapton might well have been ahead before Pope scored. Goal-keeper Ken Brown—whose handling and anticipation was to prove impeccable—was lucky to be in the way of a fierce ricochet off John Fisher, after the ball had been whipped across the penalty area.

As Wycombe rallied Bates slipped through two tackles before being robbed with the goal at his mercy and a flustered Hill headed a Thomas centre out of his goalkeeper's hands in another emergency.

But Thomas had the last laugh. He moved upfield with the attack in the 17th minute and put Ashby through for a thoroughly merited equaliser.

Some of Wycombe's defensive play erred on the side of vigour and Atkins, in particular, earned some East End invective.

Both teams missed chances in the end-to-end play, but Brown did a first-class job for Wycombe, as did Dave Thomas and Fisher. Ashby was in the thick of the Wanderers' second-half attacks. He missed an easy goal from Trott's forward pass, just failed to nod in Rockell's low centre and then scored the winner following a right-wing movement.

Wycombe's extra class and experience were telling factors after the break, but Clapton fought to the last breath.